asertain the causes and circumstances attending the accident.

In the last three years, two Courts of Inquiry have been constituted in the case of the accident at New Kenda on 25.1.1994 and the inundation of Gaslitand group of mines on 26/27.9.1995. Both the Courts of Inquiry are yet to submit their reports.

[Translation]

Explosion in Hazaribagh

3239. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether an explosion took place in 35 pits of Eastparez coal mine near Hazaribagh Thana (Bihar) under BCCL on October 25, 1996;

(b) whether the several residential houses developed cracks due to that explosion as the mine security rules were not adhered to;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the steps taken by the Government to ensure that no damage is done due to explosion in future to the residential houses which developed cracks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) As per information furnished by Coal India Limited (CIL), there is no coal mine named 35 pit of East Parez under Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL). However, there is an open cast mine named Parej East under Central Coalfields Limited (CCL). There has not been any explosion from this mine on 25th October, 1996.

(b) to (d). Do not arise in view of (a) above

[English]

Meeting on TRIPS and Patent Laws

3240. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that Parliamentarians Scientists and other concerned experts from 17 countries met in a conference in Delhi on November 14-15, 1996 to discuss the matter relating to Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and Patent Laws, on an invitation from the Forum of Parliamentarians on Intellectual Property Right;

(b) if so, the details of issues discussed in the conventions and the outcome thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (c). Yes, Sir. The issues discussed in the international conference related to Patent System, Foreign investment and emerging issues in WTO such as Labour Standards. The conference adopted a Declaration urging, inter-alia, the Governments of the developing countries to oppose any move to enlarge the scope of WTO through the introduction of new issues in the forth-coming Ministerial Meeting at Singapore. The Government has taken note of the deliberations in the Conference.

Cotton Corporation of India

3241. SHRI SANAT MEHTA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) the total loss incurred by Cotton Corporation of India for support price operation during 1995-96, and

(b) the loss recovered by Cotton Corporation of India by export of cotton during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) Since no price support operations were undertaken by the Cotton Corporation of India Ltd., during the year 1995-96, no losses were incurred.

(b) Does not arise.

Decline in Export to Russia

3242. SHRI G. VENKET SWAMY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether export to Russia has declined during the first four months of the current year especially of tea;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the remedial steps taken to boost the export during the current year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The decline in India's overall export to Russian Federation during the first four months of the current financial year i.e., April-July, 1996 has been largely caused by inadequate and delayed allocation of rupee funds under the debt re-payment track, by the human authorities lack of adequate representation of Russian importing agencies with sufficient experience in terms of allocation of rupee funds for import of goods from India to Russia and the delay in issuance of irrevocable letters of credit by the Russian banks acting as a major disincentive to the Indian exports.

Lower export ot tea to Russian Federation has been on account of procedural problems resulting from rupee allocation system in Russia for importing goods from India by Russian Federation under the debt repayment mechanism. Due to the problem of rouble coverage from the Russian importers and high interest rates prevailing in Russia, the landed cost of Indian tea being exported under the debt repayment route is becoming uncompetitive.